

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2159

Introduced by Assembly Member Brownley

February 20, 2008

An act to add and repeal Section 41054 of the Education Code, relating to education finance.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2159, as introduced, Brownley. Education finance: Commission for Funding with Accountability, Transparency, and Simplicity.

Existing law establishes the public school system in this state, and, among other things, provides for the establishment of school districts throughout the state and for their provision of instruction at the public elementary and secondary schools they operate and maintain. Existing law establishes a public school funding system that includes, among other elements, the provision of funding to local educational agencies through state apportionments, the proceeds of property taxes collected at the local level, and other sources.

This bill would express findings and declarations of the Legislature with respect to the school funding system in the state. The bill would establish the Commission for Funding with Accountability, Transparency, and Simplicity (FAcTS) to provide state policymakers with a comprehensive plan to reform the current education finance system, to leverage and support pupil achievement by making California's funding system simpler, more transparent, and more effective. The bill would leave the appointment of the members and the size of the commission unspecified. The bill would require the commission to convene no later than July 1, 2009, and to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature no later than July 1, 2010. This

provision would become inoperative on July 1, 2012, and would be repealed on January 1, 2013.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.

State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) The 22 studies of the Getting Down to Facts Project were
4 consistent in their conclusions that California's current education
5 finance system is overly complex, irrational, and burdensome, and
6 is in need of comprehensive reform.

7 (b) The complexity of the current system poses a major obstacle
8 to transparency and effectiveness. It is almost impossible to
9 determine how much revenue each school district receives or how
10 those revenues are spent, let alone to report this information to
11 local communities and stakeholders.

12 (c) The current system is not logical, with district revenues that
13 are largely a historical artifact of spending in the 1970s combined
14 with a confusing and burdensome system of categorical programs.
15 Disparities in district revenues are substantial and are not aligned
16 to pupil or community needs.

17 (d) The system places substantial restrictions on the use of
18 resources by schools and districts, creating high compliance costs
19 and making it difficult for local educators to respond to the
20 requirements of the accountability system. Fewer paperwork
21 requirements and more flexibility in allocating resources are cited
22 by school principals as one of the most important factors in
23 improving pupil outcomes.

24 (e) Many schools and districts lack the proper tools or capacity
25 to ensure that money is spent on the most effective programs and
26 practices. Administrators in low-performing schools and districts
27 have few opportunities to interact with, and learn from, colleagues
28 in successful schools and districts.

29 (f) Accountability for pupil performance is only possible with
30 a full understanding of how money is spent and how pupils are
31 performing. However, California lags behind other states in
32 collecting useful information on pupils, their teachers, and their
33 programs and resources.

(g) When data is available, it is difficult, if not impossible, to link information across different datasets or sources. Much of the data that are collected and reported locally, such as the data collected through the School Accountability Report Card, are not collected and reported centrally, and so comparisons among schools cannot be made.

(h) Research consistently finds that successful schools use data to inform teaching practices and innovation. California schools and districts vary widely in their use of data and in their capacity to use data to improve pupil performance.

SEC. 2. Section 41054 is added to the Education Code, to read:

41054. (a) The Commission for Funding with Accountability, Transparency, and Simplicity (FACETS) is hereby established. The commission shall work to provide state policymakers with a comprehensive plan to reform the current education finance system to leverage and support pupil achievement by making California's funding system simpler, more transparent, and more effective.

(b) The commission shall consider, but not necessarily be limited to, all of the following subjects as they relate to education finance in this state:

- (1) Data transparency.
- (2) Simplification.
- (3) Equity.
- (4) Flexibility and accountability for school districts.
- (5) Recommendations for statutory changes to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(c) The commission shall consist of ____ members, who shall be appointed by ____.

(d) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services, but shall be reimbursed for the actual and necessary expenses they incur in connection with the performance of their duties.

(e) The commission shall convene no later than July 1, 2009, and elect a chairperson and vice chairperson from its membership. The commission shall submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature no later than July 1, 2010.

(f) This section shall become inoperative on July 1, 2012, and, as of January 1, 2013, is repealed, unless a later enacted statute,

- 1 that becomes operative on or before January 1, 2013, deletes or
- 2 extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is repealed.

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